

# Colburn 9

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**superchub**

11-08-99, 07:54 PM

This is long but is an update on the Chattooga fishery from Doug Adams.  
The future of the Chattooga River trout fishery and the quality of our fishing experience is being threatened.  
Please share the following concern with your chapter members and ask them to E-mail or write the USFS with their views. Addresses are shown below.

After attending the USFS Planning Workshop in Clemson on October 18th & 19th, I am very concerned about the future of the managed fishery in the Rock Gorge Area of the Chattooga.

Issue #1

The USFS Rolling Alternative recommends the area for prescription 12.A. REMOTE BACKCOUNTRY RECREATION - FEW OPEN ROADS, which would allow the continuation of the GA & SC managed fishery program while protecting the area from logging and road building. I felt that this would be common ground that would fit the needs of the "preservationists". However, the WILDERNESS proponents are turning out in large numbers and are vocal in their attempt to have the area "preserved" permanently as designated WILDERNESS, ending fishery management. They either don't care or don't acknowledge that it will result in the loss of another trout fishery. Their reason for opposing REMOTE BACKCOUNTRY RECREATION designation is that it will come up for review every 10 or 15 years and WILDERNESS is permanent, not subject to review.

Due to warmer water and competition from non-trout species of fish, natural trout reproduction does not occur in the river below Big Bend Falls (about 2 miles below Burrells Ford). As you may already know, the GA TU Council, the SC TU Council, SE Region TU VP (Ray Mortensen), The Chattooga River Coalition (Monte Seehorn's group) are all on the record by letters to the USFS in both states in favor of the "Backcountry" option. Remember, we can't have it both ways. If it is designated "Wilderness", there can NOT be an exception to allow the continuation of the sub-adult Rainbow and Brown trout "put and grow" fall helicopter stocking program. It can NOT be written into the legislation, it is in conflict with the "Wilderness Act".

I think that we, as individuals, need to let our opinions be known. This is, without a doubt, the biggest threat to the future of the Chattooga River trout fishery.

Issue # 2

There is another large and vocal faction. They are "boaters" that want the Chattooga River above Highway 28 all the way to its source in NC opened to boating. They say it is public land, boating is low impact, boating is done in "high" water when people aren't fishing, therefore they are entitled to boating access above Highway 28. The present plan allows boating below Highway 28 plus the entire West Fork of the Chattooga & Overflow Creek on the GA side.

This came up on the internet yesterday.

&gt; Subject: AWA: What do the Tallulah and Section 0 of the Chattooga have in common?

&gt; From: "American Whitewater" &lt;jason@amwhitewater.org&gt;

&gt; Date: 1999/11/03

&gt; Newsgroups: rec.boats.paddle Chattooga River: Access to Sections 00, 0, and 1

&gt;

&gt; Sections 1, 0 & 00 of the Chattooga are some of the most beautiful, pristine, and remote canyons in the Southeast. They are the home of blue-ribbon trout and some of the most incredible creeking in a region known for its whitewater creeks.

&gt; These sections were closed to boaters about 20 years ago when the Forest Service decided that they were not navigable and would be reserved solely for the fishermen. American Whitewater is working to change this and we need your support!

&gt; On October 27th, American Whitewater recommended allowing boating in the headwaters of the Chattooga between December 1st and May 15th, as well as the rare occasions when the river rises above 2.6 feet at Highway 76. Our research indicates that this use season will minimize encounters with fishermen and other forest users. The complete 7-page proposal is accessible on our website at [www.awa.org](http://www.awa.org). (<http://www.awa.org>.)

&gt; Now, we need you to write letters to ensure that our proposal is included in the revised forest management plan. Those of you that are heading to the Tallulah this weekend will have a special opportunity to write letters and make sure your voices are heard. The rest of you can help by writing a letter to the Forest Planner, Tony White expressing your support and interest for our headwaters proposal (a sample letter is attached at the end of this document).

&gt; If you would like to help, or want more current information on access to these sections please call me at 301-589-9453 or send an email to [access@amwhitewater.org](mailto:access@amwhitewater.org).

&gt;

&gt; Tallulah Boaters!

&gt;

&gt; Risa Calloway and Sherry Olson have volunteered to promote a letter-writing campaign at the Tallulah this weekend to help boaters get access to Sections 00, 0, and 1 of the Chattooga. They are printing and copying a bunch of letters and envelopes with postage for your signature this weekend at the Tallulah release. Now they just need your help and cooperation. Please look for them at the registration booth and volunteer to help by writing a letter!

&gt;

&gt; If you have five to fifteen minutes:

&gt; 1. Renew your membership with American Whitewater.

&gt; 2. More money than time? Make a tax-deductible contribution to American Whitewater.

&gt; 3. Swing by the booth at the Tallulah, write your comments, and print a copy of the letter.

&gt; 4. If you can't make it to the Tallulah you can print the letter off our website and mail it from your home.

&gt;

&gt; If you have half an hour:

&gt; 1. Contact Sherry Olson and ask about volunteer activities.

&gt; 2. Call the Forest Service Planner, Tony White, at 803-561-4000, discuss the issue and ask the Forest Service to include the elements of American Whitewater's headwaters proposal in the new forest plan EIS.

&gt; 3. Call your paddling partners and ask them to write a letter.

&gt;

&gt; If you have one to two hours:

&gt; 1. Drop by the registration booth at the Tallulah and help other people write their letters, we'll have a couple of laptops and a printer in the morning and afternoon when runs are over...

&gt; 2. Spend some time discussing our proposal with your club members and ask them to write letters.

&gt;

&gt; Kayakers Write Letters!

&gt;

&gt; Tony White

&gt; Forest Planner

&gt; Supervisor's Office Sumter National Forest

&gt; 4931 Broad River Road

&gt; Columbia, South Carolina 29212-3530

&gt; Phone: 803-561-4000

&gt;

&gt; Dear Mr. White,

&gt;

&gt; I am a boater, and I support American Whitewater. I understand that the Forest Service is beginning to review its Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) for the Forest, and that this document addresses use on the Wild and Scenic portions of the Chattooga River. Please consider American Whitewater's proposal for allowing limited boater access in the headwaters of the Chattooga River on Sections 00, 0, and 1. This proposal should be included as a management alternative in the LRMP's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). I strongly encourage the Forest Service to agree to American Whitewater's request to allow boating in the headwaters of the Chattooga between December 1st and May 15th, as well as the rare occasions when the river rises above 2.6 feet at Highway 76. I believe that their proposal is consistent with the purposes of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and maximizes the opportunity for boating while minimizing the potential for conflicts with other visitors. Boating should be allowed because it provides a unique opportunity for visiting the forest without leaving a trail, and significantly contributes to my ability to enjoy visiting this dramatic area. Please add my name added to your mailing list for LRMP issues related to river management.

&gt;

&gt; Sincerely,

&gt;

Did you see this?

Whitewater boaters can only run the river when there is sufficient water to float and negotiate the rapids; whereas fishermen and other river users tend to avoid the river at higher flows when boaters would be present. The corollary is that boaters would avoid the river at lower flows when fishermen and hikers would be present. There would be limited opportunities for encounters between the different users, and, as the Forest Service emphasizes, "Numerous people may use the river at the same time, but bends and rapids prevent long sight distances, and falling water mutes sounds."

Table 4: Season & Recreation

&lt;!--[endif]&gt;

Season

Whitewater Suitability

Fishing Suitability

Dec 1st to May 15th

Excellent

Poor

May 16th to Nov 31st  
Poor  
Excellent

&lt;!--[endif]&gt;

&lt;!--[endif]&gt;

Season  
Whitewater Suitability  
Fishing Suitability

Dec 1st to May 15th  
Excellent  
Poor

May 16th to Nov 31st  
Poor  
Excellent

Did you know that the Chattooga trout fishing was Excellent in July & Aug but Poor in March, April & May?

For Complete text, go to: <http://www.awa.org/hotnews/index.html> and click on Chattooga Headwaters Proposal.

Hear are my feelings on the subject:

Boating Above Highway 28:

1. I don't think boating should be allowed above Highway 28.
2. The boaters say they would be there only during high water when there are no anglers in the river. During the last 2 years, I have encountered kayakers numerous times while fishing above Burrells Ford. Usually it is just one or two; although, once it was 4 in a pack. They don't respect the anglers. They paddle through the pools where the anglers are fishing. They know the section is off-limits, but they are not being apprehended or fined. They appear to be experienced, have good equipment, and have safety gear (PFD, helmets, wet suits, etc).
3. Below Burrells Ford is an entirely different situation. Standing on the bridge, one has no clue that a few miles down are the Big Bend Falls, the Simms Shoals, and the Rock Gorge. While fishing below Burrells Ford I have encountered floaters in wooden jon boats, open aluminum and fiberglass canoes, car top aluminum fishing boats, and K-Mart plastic rafts, usually with a cooler of beer. They have no PFD, no helmet, no wet suit, sometimes no shirt, no shoes, and one was wearing only shorts and cowboy boots. I would attempt to talk them out of the river. Some I've guided out after dark. Some would refuse and I would report it to the Stumphouse RS. Sometimes I would call the next morning to find out where the rescue squad found them. They litter the river with their abandoned debris. I don't bother with them anymore. If the area is opened to boaters, we can expect more of these novice floaters with resulting injuries and fatalities.

Now is the time to send an E-mail to the Sumter NF Planning Team leader, Tony White. He wants to hear your opinions, your needs, and your comments. The Rolling Alternative as proposed is good common ground. We need to help the USFS defend and justify it. Tony's address is: [twhite/r8\\_fms@fs.fed.us](mailto:twhite/r8_fms@fs.fed.us) or by letter:

Tony White, Planning Team Leader  
Supervisor's Office Sumter National Forest  
4931 Broad River Road  
Columbia, South Carolina 29212-3530

Thanks for your help,

Doug Adams, Director, Rabun (GA) TU Chapter .

P.S. Please notify your members through your newsletter and feel free to forward this E-mail to others that share our concern.